GAZA'S HEARTBEAT

ABDALLAH MOHAMMED SHABAT

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"IN EVERY SHATTERED STONE, A HEARTBEAT REMAINS."

DEDICATION

TO THE TENDER SOULS WHO DEPARTED TOO SOON,
TO THE CHILDREN WHOSE LAUGHTER ONCE ECHOED THROUGH OUR HOMES,
TO THE MOTHERS WHO STITCHED HOPE INTO THE TORN FABRIC OF OUR LIVES,
TO THE FATHERS WHO HELD THE SKY FROM FALLING WITH BARE, TREMBLING HANDS,
AND TO EVERY HEARTBEAT IN GAZA THAT STILL WHISPERS:
"WE ARE HERE, AND WE SHALL RISE AGAIN."

— ABDALLAH MOHAMMED SHABAT
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BEIT HANOUN – RAFAH – GAZA | APRIL 2025

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Author's Reflection
About the Author

My name is Abdallah Mohammed Shabat, born in 1992 in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip.
I hold a Master's degree in Journalism, but today, I also carry a story of displacement and loss that words can scarcely contain.

On the second day of the war, my family and I were forced to flee. We endured eight harrowing displacements, moving across Gaza — from Beit Hanoun to Al-Zahra, then to Khan Younis, Rafah, and Deir al-Balah — each time hoping for safety, each time met with devastation.

Amidst the chaos, my brother — a doctor at the Indonesian Hospital — refused to leave his post, dedicated to treating the wounded and the dying.
His sacrifice came at an unimaginable cost: three of his young children were killed in relentless bombardments.
He could not even bid them farewell as the skies rained destruction without pause.

Why I Wrote This Book

We lost everything — our homes, our lands, our vehicles.

Materially, nothing remains. Yet in the ruins, one thing endures: our humanity, and the stubborn heartbeat of Gaza that refuses to die.

I wrote this book while sitting in a torn tent, amid scorched earth, with nothing but hope to light the darkness.

It is not merely a record of war — it is a testament to resilience, to the spirit that rebuilds when walls fall, and to the heartbeat that drums even beneath the rubble.

This book is dedicated to:

- *the memory of our lost children,*
- *the steadfast hearts of Gaza's people,*
- *and to everyone who believes that humanity cannot be bombed out of existence.*

— Abdallah Mohammed Shabat

From the ruins of Beit Hanoun to the tents of Rafah and beyond

Gaza, April 2025

"FROM A TORN TENT, GAZA'S HEARTBEAT FOUND ITS VOICE."

IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS, THERE IS ALSO OPPORTUNITY."

— SUN TZU

INTRODUCTION: A PULSE AMID THE RUBBLE

The Shock of October 7

In the early hours of October 7, 2023, the world's attention abruptly turned to a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean coast.

The Gaza Strip, home to more than two million Palestinians, became the center of a conflict that escalated into one of the most devastating humanitarian crises of our time.

The events began with a resistance operation launched by the Al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian factions affiliated with Hamas, targeting southern Israel (historically South Palestine) — resulting in the deaths of approximately 1,200 Israelis and the capture of around 250 others.

A massive military response soon followed, and by April 2025, more than 51,000 Palestinians had been killed and over 117,000 injured, according to reports from the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

These numbers, as staggering as they are, fail to capture the human dimension of this tragedy

The Pulse Behind the Statistics

Behind every statistic lies a story — a life cut short, a family torn apart, a future derailed.

This book seeks to illuminate those stories and to reveal the pulse that continues to beat amid the rubble of destroyed homes, schools, and hospitals.

It is an attempt to document the resilience of a people who, even when confronted with unspeakable hardship, continue to innovate, to care for one another, and to dream of a better tomorrow.

These are not tales of passive victimhood — they are chronicles of courage, memory, and the creative instinct to survive.

They remind us that beyond politics and borders, human dignity is sacred.

Gaza Before and After

The Gaza Strip has long been a place of complexity and contradiction.

Even before October 2023, its residents lived under a suffocating blockade that had persisted for sixteen years, severely restricting the movement of people and goods.

As one of the most densely populated areas in the world, Gaza was already grappling with:

- severe shortages of clean water
- frequent power outages
- high unemployment rates

The events that unfolded in October 2023 exacerbated these challenges to an unprecedented degree.

According to United Nations reports, by April 2025:

- 69% of Gaza's population had received displacement orders
- Over 390,000 people were displaced within just three weeks (March–April 2025)
- 60% of all housing units had been completely destroyed
- The main desalination plant in southern Gaza operated at only 15% capacity due to energy shortages
- Food prices soared by up to 1,400%, and basic goods vanished from markets
- Medical supplies were critically low, especially for mothers and children

Resilience Amid the Ruins

Yet amid this vast devastation, something extraordinary has emerged: a living testament to human resilience and ingenuity.

In communities across Gaza:

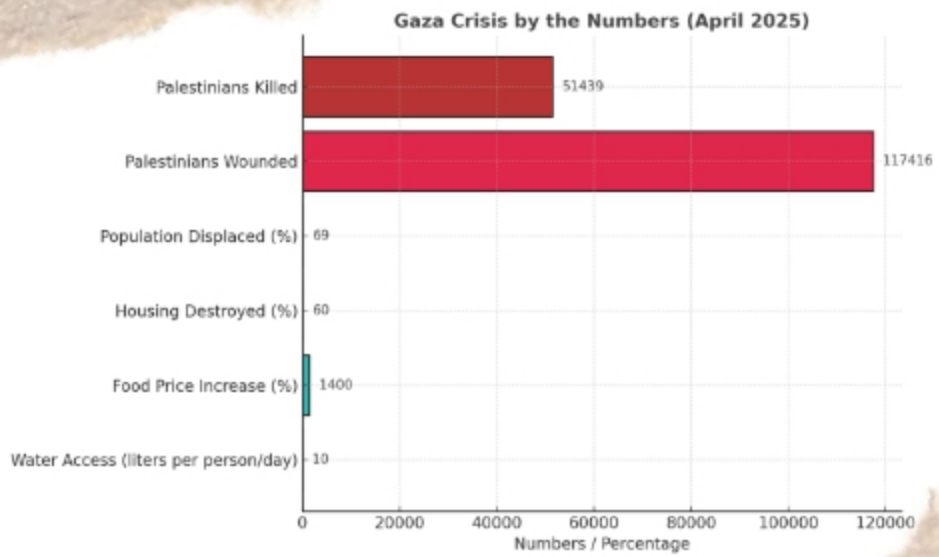
- Solar-powered water pumps now serve thousands without relying on scarce fuel
- Makeshift schools have been set up in tents and ruined buildings to keep education alive
- Handmade bicycle generators help charge phones and lights
- Doctors perform surgeries under mobile phone lights
- Teachers teach in courtyards and shelters
- Families cook, clean, pray, and love — against all odds

This book is not just about destruction — it is about what refuses to be destroyed.

It is about Gaza's heartbeat, beating still beneath the rubble.

FACT BOX: GAZA CRISIS BY THE NUMBERS (APRIL 2025)

- 51,439 Palestinians killed
- 117,416 Palestinians wounded
- 69% of Gaza under displacement orders
- 60% of housing destroyed
- Food prices up 1,400% above pre-ceasefire levels
- Water access below 10 liters per person per day (WHO recommends 50 liters)



Source: UN agencies, Gaza Ministry of Health

Opening Reflection

This book is not about politics or blame.
It does not seek to analyze the complex historical and geopolitical factors that led to this crisis, nor does it attempt to assign responsibility for its continuation.
Rather, it focuses on the human experience — the daily struggles, small triumphs, and unwavering determination of ordinary people living through extraordinary circumstances.
In the pages that follow, you will meet individuals like 12-year-old Remas, whose life was transformed by a solar-powered water pump in her neighborhood in Deir Al-Balah.
Before its installation, she would wake up every morning gripped by anxiety, wondering if she would find water for her family that day.
You will hear from Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, a plastic surgeon who volunteered at Gaza's hospitals, working tirelessly to treat the wounded while sleeping on stretchers in the operating room.
You will learn about Tala Herzallah, a 21-year-old student who hopes to survive not for her own sake, but:
"because I want to tell our stories, the stories of our people."

These narratives invite us to see beyond the headlines and statistics, to recognize the shared humanity that connects us all.

They challenge us to respond not with indifference or despair, but with empathy and solidarity.

They remind us that even in the darkest of circumstances, the human spirit can find ways to persevere, to create, and to care.

As you read these accounts, you may feel a range of emotions — sadness, anger, hope, admiration.

You may question why such suffering continues in a world of abundance and technological advancement.

You may wonder what you can do to help.

These are natural and important responses.

By bearing witness to these stories, by allowing ourselves to be moved by them, we take a small but significant step toward a more compassionate and just world.

The title of this book, "Gaza's Heartbeat," reflects its central message:

Despite everything, life in Gaza continues.

Hearts continue to beat.

People continue to love, to dream, to build, to heal.

This pulse — this stubborn insistence on life and dignity — is perhaps the most powerful form of resistance against the forces of destruction and despair.

It is our hope that by sharing these stories of resilience, we can contribute to a broader understanding of the human cost of conflict, and the universal desire for peace, security, and self-determination.

May these narratives inspire action, foster dialogue,

"...and ultimately help create a future where such stories need not be told — a future where all people, regardless of identity or location, can live with freedom, dignity, and hope."

Chapter 1: The Day Everything Changed

“We went to sleep in one world and woke up in another.” — Gaza resident

The morning of October 7, 2023, began like any other in Gaza and southern Israel. Families were waking up, preparing breakfast, planning their day. Children were getting ready for school. Shopkeepers were opening their stores. The routine of daily life continued as it had for years, despite the underlying tensions that had long characterized the region. No one could have predicted that by day’s end, the world would be forever changed, and a new chapter of suffering would begin.

The Initial Attack

At approximately 6:30 a.m., a group of Hamas commandos launched a surprise attack on southern Israel.

Thousands of rockets were fired from Gaza toward Israeli towns and cities, while armed fighters breached the security fence separating Gaza from Israel.

The attacks targeted military installations, kibbutzim (Israeli communal farms), and a music festival where young people had gathered to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah.

The assault resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,200 Israelis, including both civilians and soldiers. About 250 people were taken hostage and brought back to Gaza.

The scale and intensity of the attack shocked the world, prompting immediate condemnation from international leaders and organizations.

For Israelis, October 7 became a day of national trauma—a security failure of unprecedented proportions that left communities devastated and a nation in mourning.

For Palestinians in Gaza, it marked the beginning of a response that would unleash destruction on a scale few could have imagined.

Timeline: October 7, 2023

• 6:30 a.m.: Hamas launches a surprise attack on southern Israel
• Morning hours: Fighters breach the security fence and enter Israeli communities
• Afternoon: Israel declares a state of war and begins initial airstrikes on Gaza
• Evening: Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu vows "mighty vengeance"
• Night: First wave of Gaza residents begin fleeing their homes as bombardments intensify

Timeline: Oct. 7 202
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Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu vows "mighty vengeance"
Night
First wave e of Gaza residents begin fleeing homes as bombards

Israel's Response...

Israel's reaction was swift and severe.

Within hours, the Israeli military began launching intensive airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, targeting what it described as Hamas infrastructure, command centers, and militant positions.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that "Israel is at war," vowing to exact a "heavy price" from Hamas.

What followed was one of the most intense bombing campaigns in recent history.

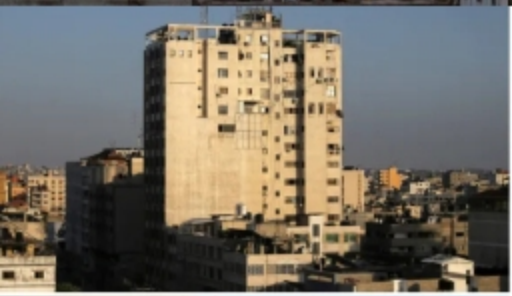
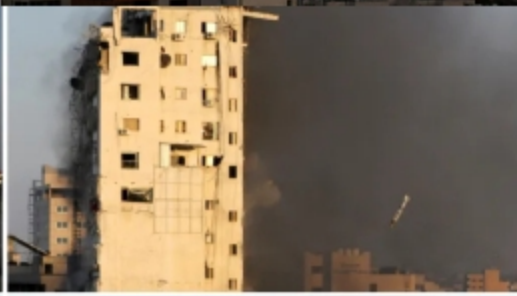
According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, over 1,500 Palestinians were killed and thousands more wounded within the first week alone.

Critical infrastructure—including power plants, water facilities, and communication networks—was damaged or destroyed, plunging Gaza into darkness and isolation.

On October 12, the Israeli military ordered the evacuation of northern Gaza, instructing approximately 1.1 million residents to move south.

The United Nations described this mass evacuation order as "impossible" without catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled their homes, carrying whatever belongings they could manage, in search of safety in the increasingly overcrowded southern Gaza Strip.

عاجل!

The Human Impact

Dr. Omar Shabat - A Doctor Between Two Wars

He was a 36-year-old pediatrician working at the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza, on his night shift when the bombing began.

As explosions shook the city, he moved steadily through the pediatric ward — checking IVs, soothing terrified children, and tending to newborns whose fragile cries were drowned by the roar of warplanes.

He had not seen his wife and children for a week.

At 5:00 p.m., his phone rang — a call that would shatter his world forever.

A missile, fired by Israeli forces, struck the neighborhood where his relatives had sought shelter after fleeing Beit Hanoun for Jabalia, believing it to be safer.

But war showed no mercy. No line was drawn between civilians and combatants, between a home and a battlefield.

Three of Omar's four children — Muath (11 years old), Yahya (8 years old), and Bayan (2 years old) — were buried under the rubble.

Only his daughter Hanan survived, pulled out by neighbors with a broken arm and eyes too silent for a child her age.

Omar collapsed in the corridor outside the intensive care unit—not from physical injuries, but from a deep sadness that took his breath away.
His colleagues carried him. He wiped his face, took a deep breath, and returned to the trauma unit.
He whispered, "I still have other children to save."
For the next three days, he worked nonstop—stitching wounds, adjusting respirators, and holding the hands of children who had passed away despite his desperate efforts.

One nurse recalled:
"He never shed a tear in front of us. But at night, when he thought no one was watching, I saw him sitting in a corner, holding a picture of his daughter, whispering her name into the silence." From that moment on, Omar kept Hanan close—just a few steps away, even in the midst of the hospital's chaos.

They ate from the same metal plate, slept side by side on the cold floor, and silently prayed for the three faces they would never see again.
He said, "The grief never ends. But the duty never ends. If I collapse, who will remain to embrace the children of Gaza when their parents can't?"

Afaf Al-Najjar, a 21-year-old student majoring in English literature at the Islamic University of Gaza, had been planning her engagement party, scheduled for October 12.

She told TIME magazine:

"I had everything prepared, and then suddenly, in the blink of an eye, everything was shattered."

Like many Gazans, Afaf and her family sought refuge in a hotel with "UN security clearance," which was supposed to be safe.

However, as the bombardment intensified, even this sanctuary became precarious.

She recalled:

"Entire neighborhoods around the hotel were completely destroyed by airstrikes. Doors fell, some windows shattered, ceilings collapsed, in addition to water, electricity, and food shortages."

When the evacuation order came, Afaf's family joined the wave of displacement toward southern Gaza.

A journey that should have taken minutes stretched into hours, as roads became clogged with desperate families.

Many walked on foot, carrying children, the elderly, and whatever belongings they could manage.

The scenes evoked historic images of mass displacement — a people fleeing into the unknown.

Personal Story: Heba's Evacuation

Heba, a 34-year-old mother of three, was preparing breakfast when she heard the first explosions.

She said:

"At first, we thought it would be like previous escalations — a few days of bombing and then things would calm down."

But when the evacuation order came, Heba realized this time was completely different.

With just 30 minutes to pack, she grabbed essential documents, some clothes for her children, and family photographs.

She explained:

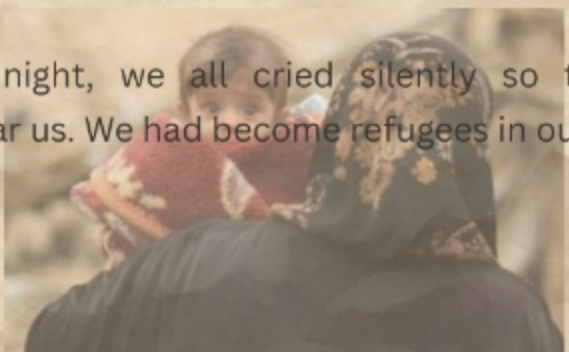
"The hardest part was explaining to my five-year-old why we couldn't take her favorite toys. How do you tell a child that your home might not be there when you return?"The family walked for seven hours to reach southern Gaza, joining thousands of displaced people crowding the roads.

"My husband carried our youngest on his shoulders. My older children showed incredible bravery, walking without complaint even as fighter jets roared overhead.".

Eventually, they found shelter in a UN school in Khan Younis, sharing a single classroom with four other families.

Heba said:

"That first night, we all cried silently so the children wouldn't hear us. We had become refugees in our own land."



The Siege and the Humanitarian Catastrophe

As the military campaign escalated, Israel imposed a "total siege" on Gaza, cutting off electricity, fuel, food, and water supplies.

The Rafah crossing with Egypt and the Erez crossing with Israel — Gaza's only gateways to the outside world — were closed, preventing the entry of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of the wounded.

The consequences were immediate and devastating.

Hospitals, already overwhelmed by casualties, were forced to operate on generator power that relied on increasingly scarce fuel.

Surgeries were performed by the light of mobile phones.

Medical supplies dwindled rapidly.

Clean water became extremely scarce, raising fears of disease outbreaks and dehydration.

Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, a renowned plastic surgeon who arrived in Gaza on October 9 as a volunteer with Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières), described the rapidly deteriorating conditions at Al-Shifa Hospital — Gaza's largest and most vital medical facility.

"Shifa Hospital itself has turned into a camp for the internally displaced, with tens of thousands of families spread across every corner of the hospital — in the corridors, on the stairwells," he said.

On October 17, a devastating explosion struck Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City — a place that had become a sanctuary for displaced civilians seeking refuge from the ongoing bombardment.

The explosion resulted in the deaths of dozens of Palestinians, including patients, families, and medical staff.

In the immediate aftermath, each side hastened to assign blame to the other, fueling confusion and international outcry.

However, amid the conflicting claims, one truth remained inescapable: it was the relentless Israeli assault on civilian infrastructure that created the conditions for such tragedies.

The bombing of Al-Ahli Hospital — whether by direct strike or by the terror of an indiscriminate battlefield — was not an isolated incident, but rather a consequence of a broader pattern:
a systematic disregard for civilian life, and a brutal campaign where no place — not even hospitals — remained sacred.

The tragedy at Al-Ahli was not merely the result of an explosion; it was the inevitable outcome of an occupation and military aggression that had for decades treated Palestinian lives as collateral damage in a conflict without accountability.

SPECIAL SURGERY BUILDING

International Response and Diplomatic Efforts

As the death toll mounted and images of destruction spread across global media, international reactions were mixed.

Many Western governments expressed support for Israel's right to defend itself, while calling for humanitarian considerations.

Arab nations condemned the Israeli response as disproportionate, demanding an immediate ceasefire.

The United Nations Security Council held emergency sessions but struggled to reach a unified resolution.

Meanwhile, humanitarian organizations issued urgent appeals for access to Gaza, warning of catastrophe if aid was not allowed to enter.

On October 21, following intense diplomatic pressure, limited humanitarian aid was finally allowed to enter Gaza via the Rafah crossing with Egypt.

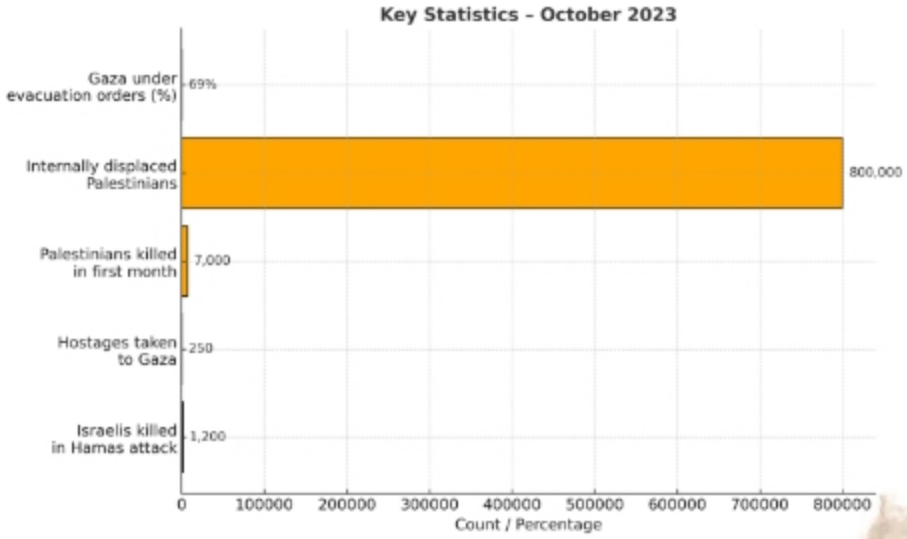
However, the volume of aid was far below what was needed.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres described the crisis as:

"A humanitarian catastrophe unfolding before our eyes."

Key Statistics – October 2023

- 1,200 Israelis killed in Hamas attack
- 250 hostages taken to Gaza
- 7,000+ Palestinians killed in first month of Israeli response
- 800,000 Palestinians internally displaced
- 69% of Gaza under evacuation orders



Sources: Israeli authorities, Gaza Ministry of Health, United Nations

The Beginning of a Long Ordeal

What many initially hoped would be a brief, if intense, conflict soon revealed itself to be the beginning of a prolonged ordeal.

By the end of October, it was clear that Gaza was facing not just the immediate impact of bombardment but a comprehensive breakdown of the systems that sustain human life—water, electricity, food, medical care, and shelter.

For the people of Gaza, October 7 and its aftermath marked not just a day but the beginning of a new reality—one characterized by constant fear, displacement, and deprivation.

As one resident put it:

"We went to sleep in one world and woke up in another."

The events of October 2023 set in motion a chain of consequences that would continue to unfold over the following months and years.

They transformed not only the physical landscape of Gaza but also its social, economic, and psychological terrain.

Understanding this transformation—and the resilience with which Gazans have responded to it—requires looking beyond the initial shock to the long, difficult journey that followed.

Chapter 2: Living Amid Crisis

In the months following October 7, 2023, life in Gaza transformed into a daily struggle for survival.

What was once a challenging but manageable existence under blockade became an all-encompassing battle for the most basic necessities: water, food, shelter, and safety.

By April 2025, eighteen months into the conflict, the humanitarian situation had deteriorated to levels that shocked even the most experienced aid workers.

Yet amid this crisis, the rhythms of daily life somehow continued—altered, diminished, but stubbornly persistent.

As we move forward in this book, we will explore how the people of Gaza have navigated this journey, finding ways to survive, to maintain their dignity, and even to create amid destruction.

Their stories reveal not just the depth of human suffering, but also the heights of human resilience—a pulse that continues to beat amid the rubble.

A New Normal

By April 2025, according to UN reports, approximately 69% of Gaza was under displacement orders. An estimated 60% of housing had been destroyed or severely damaged. Two-thirds of the Gaza Strip territory was designated as “no-go” zones or placed under displacement orders. In just three weeks during March-April 2025, over 390,000 people were displaced, many for the second, third, or fourth time since the conflict began.

For most Gazans, “home” no longer meant a permanent dwelling but rather wherever they could find temporary shelter—a tent in a crowded camp, a classroom in an overcrowded school, a relative’s apartment shared with multiple families, or even just a patch of ground covered with a tarpaulin. Privacy, comfort, and security—the fundamental elements that make a house a home—became luxuries few could afford.

The landscape of Gaza itself was transformed. Once-bustling neighborhoods were reduced to rubble. Landmarks that had oriented residents for generations disappeared. Roads became impassable, filled with debris or cratered by explosions. The geography of daily life had to be relearned, with new routes, new dangers, and new centers of community activity emerging from necessity.

BBC NEWS | عربي

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The Water Crisis

Perhaps no resource became more precious—or more scarce—than clean water. By April 2025, the main desalination plant for southern Gaza was operating at only 15% capacity due to electricity cuts imposed by Israel. The second-largest desalination plant in Gaza, located in Deir Al-Balah, which had been running at 30% capacity on generators in early March 2025, had completely shut down by April due to fuel shortages.

For ordinary Gazans, this meant that access to water—for drinking, cooking, bathing, and sanitation—became a central preoccupation. Many were forced to survive on less than 10 liters per person per day, far below the minimum 50 liters recommended by the World Health Organization for basic health and hygiene.

Umm Hassan, a mother of four living in a tent in Khan Younis, described her daily water rationing routine: "I wake up before dawn to queue for water. Sometimes I wait for hours, only to receive a few liters. I must decide: Do my children drink today, or do we wash? Do I cook food, or do I clean our clothes? These are choices no mother should have to make."

The water that was available was often of poor quality, leading to outbreaks of waterborne diseases, particularly among children. Doctors Without Borders reported in March 2025 that "water is being used as a weapon of war in Gaza," with widespread water insecurity "fueling a severe survival crisis with far-reaching public health and protection consequences."

BBC NEWS | عربي

Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

By April 2025, the food situation in Gaza had become catastrophic. According to UN News, food prices had surged by up to 1,400% above pre-ceasefire levels. In April alone, prices rose by 50% compared to March. Basic necessities such as dairy, eggs, fruits, and meat had disappeared from local markets. Cash shortages and collapsing purchasing power pushed countless families deeper into hunger.

The World Food Programme warned of mass starvation, reporting that:

“Months of Israeli blockades have entirely depleted food stocks in Gaza.”

By April 2025, more than one million people — half of Gaza’s population — were relying on UNRWA aid for survival. However, with no aid entering Gaza since March 2, 2025, according to UNICEF, even this fragile lifeline was in danger of vanishing.

Food Insecurity and Malnutrition

In the Asdaa camp, one of many informal displacement sites across Gaza, a makeshift market operated for a few early morning hours. Vendors offered whatever they could find — a few vegetables, some canned goods, occasionally rice or flour. Prices were astronomical, but the alternative was hunger.

“We eat one meal a day now,” said Khalil, a former construction worker now living in the camp with his wife and three children.

“Sometimes it is just bread and tea. My children are always hungry. They have forgotten what it means to feel full.”

The effects of this worsening crisis were evident: malnutrition rates skyrocketed, especially among children and pregnant women.

UNICEF warned:

“Malnutrition, disease and other preventable conditions are expected to surge, increasing the risk of preventable child deaths.”

Power Outages and Energy Innovation

Electricity, already scarce before the conflict, became even more limited as the war dragged on.
By 2025, most areas of Gaza were receiving only 4 to 6 hours of power per day, if any at all.

This shortage affected every aspect of life — from the refrigeration of food and medicine, to communication devices, water pumping, and even the operation of hospitals and emergency rooms.

In the absence of consistent power, entire communities were forced to innovate.
Solar panels, once considered a luxury or environmental choice, became tools of survival.

In Deir Al-Balah, a solar-powered water pump installed in 2024 began serving over 2,000 people, providing consistent access to water without relying on fuel or generators, which had become almost impossible to obtain.

Power Outages and Energy Innovation

Twelve-year-old Remas, one of the many who benefited from the solar installation, described the change it brought to her life:

“Without the solar panels we wouldn’t have water. Our life became easier. Before I would wake up feeling anxious. I was thinking about water all the time. Alhamdulilah, now it’s different.”

The solar panels didn’t just power the pump — they allowed people to recharge phones and batteries, to keep lights on, and to reclaim a small sense of normalcy amid chaos.

Beyond solar, bicycle generators began to appear across Gaza.
These devices, powered by pedaling, enabled individuals to produce small amounts of electricity — just enough to charge a phone, a flashlight, or a radio.

In a place where information could mean life or death, such tools were more than convenience — they were lifelines.
They connected families, delivered news, and allowed people to call for help, even when the grid was gone.

نحن نقدم
خدمات
شحن
جوالات وبطاريات
وإنارة

Healthcare in Crisis

The healthcare system in Gaza, already strained before October 2023, reached a breaking point during the war.

According to Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah:

“The health system had 2,500 beds when the war started, and now it has 12,500 wounded.”

Hospitals were overwhelmed — not only treating the injured but also serving as shelters for tens of thousands of displaced families:

“Every compound of the hospital, every corridor, every stairwell was filled with families seeking refuge.”

By April 2025, critical shortages began to cripple the system.

Medicines, medical supplies, and blood units — especially for maternal and child health — were almost entirely depleted.

Doctors faced impossible choices:

Performing surgeries without adequate anesthesia

Reusing disposable equipment

Prioritizing patients based on survival likelihood, in direct conflict with their professional ethics, but dictated by desperation.

Healthcare in Crisis

At Al-Aqsa Hospital, Dr. Khalil, a general surgeon, shared a harrowing memory:
“We were in the middle of abdominal surgery when the lights went out. The generator had failed. The nurse held her phone as a light while I continued operating. The patient was awake — we had no general anesthesia left. I could see the pain in his eyes, but also the trust. He knew we were doing everything possible.”
Such scenes became commonplace across Gaza —
surgeries under flashlight beams,
patients conscious during major operations,
medical staff forced to act with nothing but courage and bare hands.
The collapse of Gaza’s healthcare system was not just a medical crisis;
it was a humanitarian catastrophe, unfolding in hospital corridors where life and death blurred into one long, unbroken emergency.

Children's Lives Disrupted

For Gaza's children, who make up approximately half of the population, the crisis brought particular hardships. Schools were either destroyed, repurposed as shelters, or simply too dangerous to attend. Education, once highly valued in Gaza society, became a luxury that few could access.

Yet even amid the rubble, children found ways to play. In displacement camps, they fashioned toys from debris, organized games in the narrow spaces between tents, and created moments of normality in profoundly abnormal circumstances.

Samed, a six-year-old boy living in the Nuseirat camp, collected broken pieces of concrete and arranged them into structures. "I'm building a new house," he explained. "When I grow up, I want to be an engineer so I can rebuild Gaza. I will make the buildings strong so they don't fall down."

For parents, maintaining some semblance of routine for their children became a form of resistance. Mothers organized informal classes in tents. Fathers told traditional stories in the evenings. Families celebrated birthdays with whatever meager resources they could gather—a small cake made from rationed flour, a handmade toy, a special story.

Community Bonds Strengthened

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of life amid crisis was the strengthening of community bonds. In a society where extended family networks had always been important, these connections became essential for survival. Resources were shared, burdens divided, grief collectively shouldered.

In the Asdaa camp, residents established a rotation system for bread-making, with each family contributing what ingredients they could and taking turns using a communal oven. Similar arrangements emerged for childcare, water collection, and security.

Nada, a mother of three who lost her husband in an airstrike, found support in this communal approach: “My neighbors became my family. When I have nothing to feed my children, someone always appears with something to share. When I cannot continue, someone lifts me up. We survive together or not at all.”

Religious practices, always central to Gaza’s predominantly Muslim society, took on new significance. Prayer times structured the day. Communal worship provided spiritual comfort and social connection. Religious leaders played important roles in organizing aid distribution, resolving disputes, and providing counsel to the bereaved.

Adapting to Survive

Daily life in Gaza became an exercise in constant adaptation. Routines had to be flexible, plans provisional, expectations managed. People learned to move quickly when warnings came, to store water whenever it was available, to cook without electricity, to treat injuries without proper medical supplies.

Markets adapted to the new reality, operating in the early morning hours when the risk of airstrikes was perceived to be lower. Vendors sold their wares from carts that could be quickly moved if danger approached. The informal economy expanded, with people trading services, sharing resources, and creating new systems of value in a cash-strapped environment.

Communication networks evolved as well. With internet access unreliable and electricity scarce, people developed systems for sharing information—designated charging stations where phones could be powered, message relays between different areas, community bulletin boards where news and announcements could be posted.

The Psychological Toll

Beyond the physical hardships, the ongoing crisis exacted a heavy psychological toll. Living under constant threat, witnessing destruction and death, experiencing multiple displacements—these traumas affected everyone in Gaza, though they manifested differently across age groups and individuals.

For children, the effects were particularly concerning. Many exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder—nightmares, bedwetting, aggressive behavior, withdrawal. Parents reported that their children startled at loud noises, feared the dark, or refused to be separated from family members.

Adults struggled with anxiety, depression, and profound grief. Many reported difficulty sleeping, intrusive thoughts, and a sense of hopelessness about the future. The normal processes of mourning were disrupted by the ongoing crisis and the lack of safe spaces to grieve.

Umm Khalil, an elderly woman who had lived through multiple conflicts in her lifetime, offered perspective to younger generations: “This is not our first suffering, and it may not be our last. But we remain. We endure. This is what it means to be Palestinian in Gaza—to live, to continue, to remember, and to hope even when hope seems foolish.”

Conclusion: The Dignity of Daily Life

What emerges from these accounts of daily life in Gaza is not just a story of suffering but also one of dignity maintained against overwhelming odds.

In continuing to care for their children, to support their neighbors, to observe religious practices, to create moments of joy amid sorrow, the people of Gaza asserted their humanity in the face of conditions that threatened to reduce them to mere statistics.

The routines of daily life—however altered and diminished—became acts of resistance.

Each meal prepared, each child comforted, each prayer offered, each joke shared represented a refusal to surrender to despair.

In the words of Mahmoud Darwish, the celebrated Palestinian poet:

"On this earth, there is what makes life worth living."

As we will see in the next chapter, this determination to live—not merely to survive—also manifested in remarkable innovations and adaptations that allowed communities to meet their most pressing needs without formal systems or external support.

The story of Gaza is not only one of victimhood,
but also one of agency, creativity, and collective resilience.

The Necessity of Innovation

By April 2025, the situation in Gaza had reached a critical point. With no aid entering since March 2, according to UNICEF, and severe restrictions on electricity, fuel, and water, communities faced a stark choice: innovate or perish. The blockade that had been in place for years had already fostered a culture of improvisation and repair—Gazans were accustomed to fixing and repurposing items that could not be replaced. But the escalation of the conflict after October 2023 demanded innovation on an entirely new scale.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," said Mahmoud Al-Najjar, an engineer who had previously worked on water infrastructure projects. "When your children are thirsty and there is no clean water, when your home is dark and there is no electricity, when your community is suffering and there is no help coming—you must create solutions from whatever you have."

This spirit of innovation manifested across multiple domains—water purification, energy generation, education, healthcare, and food production. What united these diverse efforts was a commitment to community-based solutions that could be implemented with locally available materials and maintained without external support.

Water Solutions: From Scarcity to Sustainability

Water scarcity emerged as one of the most pressing challenges. With less than 10 liters available per person per day—far below the 50 liters recommended by the World Health Organization—and much of that water contaminated or brackish, communities needed ways to increase both the quantity and quality of their water supply.

Solar-Powered Desalination

In Deir Al-Balah, a community initiative launched in 2024 demonstrated the potential of solar-powered desalination. Using photovoltaic panels salvaged from damaged buildings, a team led by Mahmoud Al-Najjar constructed a small-scale desalination system that could produce up to 2,000 liters of clean water per day when operating at full capacity.

“The principle is simple,” Al-Najjar explained. “The solar panels generate electricity that powers pumps to push seawater through membranes that filter out the salt. What makes our system unique is that we’ve designed it to work with intermittent power and to be repaired using locally available parts.”

The impact of this innovation extended beyond the technical achievement. For 12-year-old Remas and the approximately 2,000 people served by the system, it transformed daily life. “Without the solar panels we wouldn’t have water,” Remas said. “Our life became easier. Before I would wake up feeling anxious. I was thinking about water all the time. Alhamdlilah, now it’s different.”

Similar systems, though smaller in scale, began to appear in other communities. By April 2025, the Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON) reported at least 15 community-operated solar desalination units across Gaza, collectively serving an estimated 20,000 people.

Rainwater Harvesting and Filtration

In addition to desalination, communities developed systems for harvesting and filtering rainwater. Though Gaza's climate is arid, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months, even modest precipitation became a valuable resource.

In Khan Younis, residents of a displacement camp constructed a network of gutters and pipes to channel rainwater from the plastic sheeting that covered their temporary shelters into communal storage tanks. The collected water was then filtered through layers of sand, gravel, and charcoal—a simple but effective method for removing contaminants.

"During the winter rains, we collected enough water to supplement our supply for several weeks," said Fatima, one of the project organizers. "It is not enough on its own, but when combined with other sources, it makes a difference. Every drop counts."

Mobile Water Treatment

For communities without access to desalination or rainwater harvesting infrastructure, mobile water treatment units provided a lifeline. These portable systems, often mounted on carts or bicycles, could be moved between neighborhoods to treat water from wells or other sources.

One such unit, developed by a group of engineering students from the Islamic University of Gaza, used a combination of sedimentation, filtration, and solar-powered UV disinfection to make contaminated water safe for drinking. The students built five prototypes, each capable of treating up to 200 liters per day, and trained community members to operate and maintain them.

“We designed these units to be as simple and robust as possible,” said Layla, one of the student engineers. “They don’t require specialized parts or technical expertise to maintain. This is crucial because we cannot rely on external support or imported components.”

Energy Innovations: Power Amid Darkness

Since the beginning of the war, Gaza has faced a complete and continuous blackout—no access to electricity across vast areas of the Strip. In response, energy generation became a vital focus of local innovation. The challenge was not merely to restore power, but to develop sustainable, fuel-independent solutions—crucial in a context where fuel supplies are blocked and external support is inaccessible.

Solar Power Systems

Solar energy emerged as the most viable alternative. Gaza's abundant sunshine—averaging over 3,000 hours of solar radiation per year—provided a resource that could not be blockaded or restricted. The challenge lay in acquiring and maintaining the necessary equipment.

Communities responded by salvaging solar panels from damaged buildings, repairing broken units, and even constructing rudimentary panels using locally available materials. These were typically small-scale installations, sufficient to power essential devices rather than entire households or facilities.

In addition to the solar-powered water pump in Deir Al-Balah, solar installations appeared on the roofs of makeshift schools, community centers, and medical clinics. These systems prioritized critical needs—refrigeration for medicines, lighting for nighttime medical procedures, charging stations for communication devices.

"The solar panels not only power the water pump, but also allow people to recharge phones, batteries, and meet basic energy needs like keeping lights on," Remas explained. For her family and many others, this meant the difference between connection and isolation, between safety and vulnerability.

Bicycle Generators

For more immediate and portable energy needs, bicycle generators provided an innovative solution. These devices, which convert mechanical energy from pedaling into electrical energy, could be constructed using salvaged motors and basic electrical components.

Community centers and schools often maintained several bicycle generators that residents could use to charge phones, batteries, or other small devices. The system was particularly valuable for emergency communications and for powering medical devices like nebulizers that required only short periods of electricity.

“My son has asthma, and his nebulizer needs power to work,” said Omar, a father of three living in Jabalia camp. “When he has an attack, I can take him to the community center and generate enough electricity in 20 minutes of pedaling to give him a treatment. It’s exhausting, but it’s better than watching him struggle to breathe.”

The bicycle generators also provided an unexpected benefit: physical activity and a sense of agency for people whose lives had been disrupted by the conflict. Children took turns pedaling, turning the necessity into a game. Elderly residents who could still pedal found satisfaction in contributing to their community’s energy needs.

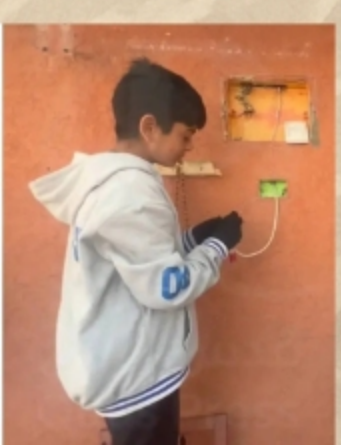
TREK

Wind Turbines from Scrap

In coastal areas, where sea breezes provide a consistent source of wind energy, some communities constructed small wind turbines using scrap materials. Motors from damaged washing machines, blades fashioned from plastic containers, and towers built from metal pipes combined to create devices capable of generating modest amounts of electricity.

These wind turbines typically produced less power than solar panels but had the advantage of operating day and night, as long as the wind was blowing. They were often used in combination with solar systems to provide more consistent energy access.

“We try to use every resource available to us,” said Khalid, who helped construct several wind turbines in a fishing community near Gaza City. “The sun, the wind, the sea—these are things that cannot be taken away from us, no matter how tight the blockade.”



Educational Resilience: Learning Amid Chaos

Education has long been valued in Gaza, where literacy rates historically exceeded 95% despite economic hardship. The conflict threatened this achievement, with schools destroyed, teachers displaced, and the basic materials of learning—books, paper, pencils—in short supply. Yet communities found ways to ensure that children's education continued.

Makeshift Schools

With formal school buildings either destroyed or repurposed as shelters, education moved into tents, under trees, or in the partial remains of damaged structures. These makeshift schools operated with minimal resources but maintained a commitment to structured learning.

In the Nuseirat camp, a group of displaced teachers established a school in six connected tents, serving over 300 children in shifts. They divided the space into "classrooms" using hanging sheets and created a simple curriculum focusing on literacy, numeracy, and emotional support.

"We have no desks, few books, and sometimes we must stop lessons because of airstrikes," said Noor, one of the teachers. "But we continue because education is not a luxury—it is a necessity. It gives children structure, purpose, and hope for a future beyond this crisis."

Parents contributed what they could—a notebook here, a pencil there. Children shared resources, with three or four often using the same textbook. Older students helped teach younger ones, creating a multi-level learning environment that made efficient use of the limited number of qualified teachers.

Digital Learning Hubs

In areas with access to electricity, even intermittently, digital learning hubs provided another educational innovation. These centers typically consisted of a few laptops or tablets, often donated or salvaged from damaged buildings, loaded with educational software and digital textbooks.

The devices were connected to small solar charging systems that allowed them to operate for several hours each day. Students would sign up for time slots, with priority given to those preparing for critical examinations or studying specialized subjects.

"We cannot connect to the internet reliably, so we download resources whenever possible and store them locally," explained Tariq, who managed a digital hub serving teenagers in Khan Younis. "We have a complete curriculum for grades 1-12 stored on our server, plus university preparation materials and some specialized resources for students with learning differences."

These hubs became community gathering points, places where knowledge was shared and preserved despite the surrounding destruction. They also provided psychological benefits, offering young people a connection to the wider world and a sense that their education—and therefore their future—remained valuable.

Educational Toys from Debris

For younger children, learning through play remained essential despite the scarcity of toys and educational materials. Parents and teachers responded by creating educational toys from the debris that littered Gaza's landscape.

Wooden blocks were fashioned from broken furniture. Counting games used collected bottle caps or stones. Alphabet cards were cut from cardboard packaging. These simple materials allowed children to develop cognitive skills while providing a distraction from the trauma around them.

Umm Ahmad, a former kindergarten teacher, organized workshops to teach parents how to create these educational materials. "Children learn through play, even in the worst circumstances," she said. "When we make these toys together, we are not just creating learning tools—we are creating moments of normality and joy for our children."

Healthcare Adaptations: Healing with Limited Resources

The healthcare system in Gaza faced overwhelming challenges—facilities damaged or destroyed, medical supplies depleted, staff working beyond exhaustion, and a constant influx of wounded patients. Innovation in this sector focused on maximizing the impact of limited resources and finding alternatives when standard treatments were unavailable.

Mobile Clinics

With many hospitals damaged and the remaining facilities overcrowded, mobile clinics brought healthcare to displaced communities. These clinics, often operating from vans or converted buses, provided basic medical services, vaccinations, maternal care, and first aid.

Dr. Laila, who coordinated a network of five mobile clinics serving camps in central Gaza, described their approach: “We cannot offer everything a hospital can, but we can prevent minor issues from becoming life-threatening. We treat infections before they spread, manage chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension, and identify patients who need more specialized care.”

The mobile clinics operated on minimal resources, with solar panels on their roofs to power essential equipment and refrigeration for vaccines and medications. They maintained regular schedules, visiting each location on specific days so that residents could plan accordingly.

Traditional Medicine Revival

As pharmaceutical supplies dwindled, there was a revival of interest in traditional Palestinian herbal medicines. Knowledge that had been preserved primarily by older generations became increasingly valuable as communities sought alternatives to unavailable medications.

Herbs grown in small gardens or collected from the landscape were used to treat a range of conditions—sage for digestive issues, thyme for respiratory problems, chamomile for anxiety and insomnia. While these remedies could not replace modern pharmaceuticals for serious conditions, they provided relief for many common ailments.

Umm Khalil, an elderly woman known for her knowledge of traditional medicine, found herself surrounded by young people eager to learn. “My grandmother taught me, and her grandmother taught her,” she said. “I never thought these old ways would be so needed again. Now I teach anyone who wants to learn, so this knowledge will not be lost.”

Telemedicine Networks

In areas with even intermittent internet access, telemedicine networks connected patients in Gaza with specialists both locally and internationally. These networks operated through secure messaging apps that could function even with limited bandwidth.

Dr. Khalil, a surgeon at Al-Aqsa Hospital, described how these networks supported complex cases: “When we encounter a condition beyond our expertise or resources, we can send images and descriptions to colleagues outside Gaza. They advise on diagnosis and treatment options that are feasible with what we have available. It’s not ideal, but it has saved lives.”

The telemedicine networks also facilitated knowledge sharing among healthcare providers within Gaza, allowing successful innovations and adaptations to spread quickly from one facility to another.

Agricultural Innovations: Growing Food in Devastated Land

Amid widespread food insecurity in Gaza—marked by soaring prices and scarce supplies—agricultural innovation became a critical survival strategy. With vast areas rendered unusable by destruction or contamination, communities turned to creative, small-scale solutions to grow food in confined and damaged spaces.

Urban rooftops, rubble-cleared plots, and even broken containers were transformed into micro-farms. Using techniques like vertical gardening, hydroponics, and recycled water systems, families were able to produce vegetables, herbs, and other essentials. These innovations, though modest in scale, helped reduce dependence on unreliable food aid and brought a measure of resilience to everyday life.

Rooftop and Container Gardens

With agricultural land either destroyed by bombing or inaccessible due to military operations, urban agriculture became essential. Rooftops, balconies, and even window sills were transformed into productive growing spaces.

Container gardening proved particularly effective, using salvaged buckets, tires, and plastic bottles as planters. These could be moved if necessary and required less soil than traditional garden beds. Fast-growing, nutrient-dense crops like leafy greens, radishes, and herbs were prioritized for their quick returns and high nutritional value.

“My rooftop garden feeds my family of six,” said Samira, who maintained an extensive container system on the roof of a partially damaged apartment building in Gaza City. “We grow spinach, parsley, green onions, and radishes. It’s not enough for all our needs, but it provides fresh vegetables that we could not afford to buy.”

Aquaponics Systems

In some communities, more sophisticated aquaponics systems combined fish farming with plant cultivation in a symbiotic relationship. Fish waste provided nutrients for the plants, while the plants filtered the water for the fish, creating a closed-loop system that required minimal inputs once established.

These systems were typically small-scale, housed in plastic tanks and PVC pipes salvaged from damaged buildings. They focused on hardy fish species like tilapia and plants that thrive in aquaponic conditions, such as lettuce and herbs.

“An aquaponic system uses 90% less water than traditional farming,” explained Yusuf, who helped establish several community aquaponics projects. “This is crucial in Gaza, where water is so scarce. Once set up, the system requires little maintenance—just fish food and occasional monitoring of water conditions.”

Seed Saving and Exchange

As commercial seeds became increasingly difficult to obtain, communities established seed saving and exchange networks to preserve genetic diversity and ensure future growing seasons. These networks collected seeds from successful crops, stored them properly, and distributed them to growers throughout Gaza.

“Seeds are life,” said Amal, who coordinated a seed bank serving several displacement camps. “When we save seeds, we are saving our future ability to feed ourselves. Each seed carries the potential for many meals, for independence from aid, for continuation of our agricultural heritage.”

The seed networks prioritized locally adapted varieties that could thrive in Gaza’s challenging conditions—drought-tolerant, salt-resistant, and capable of producing in poor soil. They also preserved traditional Palestinian crop varieties that held cultural significance beyond their nutritional value.

Community-Led Initiatives and International Support

Many of these innovations emerged organically from communities responding to immediate needs. However, some received support from international organizations that recognized the value of locally driven solutions.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided technical assistance and limited materials for several solar desalination projects. UNICEF supported mobile water treatment units and digital learning hubs. Various NGOs contributed to seed banks and agricultural initiatives.

Importantly, this support typically followed rather than led local innovation. International organizations identified promising community-led projects and provided resources to scale or replicate them, respecting the expertise and agency of Gaza's residents.

"The most successful projects are those that emerge from the community itself," said a UNDP representative. "Our role is not to impose solutions but to support the ingenuity that already exists. The people of Gaza know their needs and constraints better than anyone."

The Limits of Innovation

While these innovations have made a significant difference in many lives, it is important to acknowledge their limitations. No amount of community ingenuity can fully compensate for the systematic destruction of infrastructure, the severe restrictions on movement and imports, and the ongoing violence that characterizes life in Gaza.

Solar panels cannot replace a functioning power grid. Rooftop gardens cannot replace commercial agriculture. Mobile clinics cannot replace fully equipped hospitals. The innovations described in this chapter represent remarkable achievements under impossible circumstances, but they also highlight the fundamental injustice of those circumstances.

As Dr. Abu-Sittah observed, “We should celebrate the resilience and creativity of Gaza’s people without romanticizing their suffering or accepting the conditions that make such innovation necessary. The ultimate solution is not better coping mechanisms but an end to the conditions that require them.”

Conclusion: Innovation as Resistance

Despite these limitations, the innovations emerging from Gaza represent something profound—a refusal to surrender agency even in the most disempowering circumstances. By creating solutions to their own problems, the people of Gaza assert their dignity, their capabilities, and their right to determine their own future.

In this context, innovation becomes a form of resistance—not in a militant sense, but as an affirmation of humanity and possibility in the face of forces that would deny both. Each solar panel installed, each garden planted, each makeshift school established represents not just a practical solution but a statement: We are still here. We are still creating. We still have a future worth building.

As we will see in the next chapter, which presents the voices of Gaza's residents in their own words, this spirit of resilience and determination extends beyond technological innovation to encompass the full range of human experience—grief and joy, loss and hope, memory and aspiration. Together, these elements form the heartbeat that continues to pulse amid the rubble, sustaining a community that refuses to be defined solely by its suffering.

Chapter 4: Voices of Gaza

In the chapters preceding this one, we explored the events of October 7, 2023, their devastating aftermath, and the daily struggles and extraordinary resilience of Gazans navigating life amid crisis. Now, we turn directly to the people themselves—to the voices of Gaza.

This chapter presents personal testimonies from individuals who have lived through these events firsthand. Shared with minimal editing, these stories open a window into the diverse experiences, emotions, and perspectives that define Gaza's collective journey since October 2023.

These accounts are not meant to speak for every Gazan, nor do they seek to promote any specific political message. Rather, they are individual reflections that, when brought together, reveal the deeply human side of a crisis too often reduced to headlines, data points, or geopolitical discourse. They remind us that behind every statistic is a name, a face, a story—a person whose life has been upended, but not erased, by conflict.

Youth: Dreams Amid Destruction

(Samed, 6, Nuseirat Camp)

Samed lives with his parents and two older sisters in a tent in Nuseirat camp after their home in Gaza City was destroyed in November 2023. Despite his young age, he has developed clear ideas about his future.

I want to be an engineer when I grow up. I will build houses that don't fall down when the bombs come. I will make them strong with special concrete.

Before we came here, I had my own room with a blue carpet and a shelf for my toys. Now we all sleep together in the tent. It's okay because I'm not scared at night when everyone is close.

My friend Ahmed and I collect pieces of broken buildings. We sort them by size and color. Sometimes we build small houses with them. I told Ahmed we will be engineers together and rebuild Gaza when we are big.

School is in a big tent now. I like math the best. The teacher says I'm good at it. You need math to be an engineer.

Sometimes I dream about our old house. In my dream, it's fixed again and all my toys are there. When I wake up, I remember they are gone. But that's okay. When I'm an engineer, I will make new ones.

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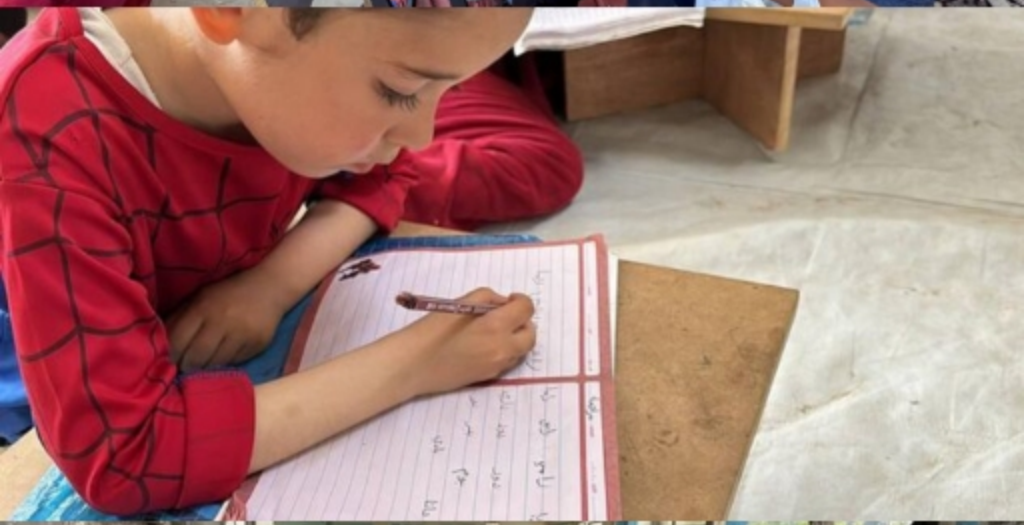


(Tala Herzallah, 21, University Student)

Tala was in her final year of studies at the Islamic University of Gaza when the conflict began. Her academic pursuits have been interrupted, but she remains committed to documentation and bearing witness.

"I hope that we'll stay alive, not because I want life, but because I want to tell our stories, the stories of our people. This is what keeps me going each day—the responsibility to document, to remember, to ensure that what is happening here is not forgotten or erased."

Before October 7, Tala had a clear vision for her future: complete her degree, perhaps study abroad, then return to help rebuild her community.

"Now, the future is a luxury we cannot afford to contemplate. We live hour by hour, day by day at most."

Her university lies in ruins.

"My professors—brilliant minds who encouraged critical thinking and academic excellence—are scattered, some dead, some wounded, some displaced like me. The intellectual life of Gaza, which was so vibrant despite all our challenges, has been devastated. This loss is immeasurable and rarely discussed in news reports about the conflict."

A Journal of Resistance

Tala keeps a journal in her displacement camp.

"I write whenever I can find a quiet moment and enough light to see the page. I record what I witness, what I feel, what others tell me."

She gathers testimonies:

The elderly who have survived multiple wars.

Children who can distinguish different types of explosions.

Mothers performing daily miracles to keep their families alive.

"Their testimonies must be preserved. If we survive this, these stories will be crucial for rebuilding not just our infrastructure but our collective memory and identity. If we do not survive, I hope someone will find these writings and know that we were here, that we lived and loved and dreamed like anyone else, that we were more than just casualties in a distant conflict."

For Tala, writing is resistance.

"Education was always my pathway to agency and understanding. Now, documentation serves the same purpose. In recording what happens, I assert that our lives matter, that truth matters, that history cannot be written only by those with the most power. This is its own form of resistance."

(Yousef, 17, Khan Younis)

Yousef was a high school student with dreams of becoming a doctor. Those dreams were interrupted when the war began, and his father was killed in an airstrike in December 2023. Now, he lives in a displacement camp with his mother and younger siblings, helping run a community kitchen.

"Since my father was killed, I've become the man of the family. My mother says I shouldn't have to grow up so fast, but what choice do we have? My siblings need someone to look up to, someone to make them feel safe even when safety is an illusion."

Before the war, Yousef's life was much like any other teenager's.

"I studied hard because I wanted to go to medical school. I played football with my friends. I argued with my parents about staying out too late. Normal things. Now, nothing is normal."

The community kitchen where he volunteers feeds around 300 people a day.

"We start work before dawn, preparing a simple stew with whatever we can find—lentils, chickpeas, sometimes a few vegetables. People bring their own containers, and we portion it based on family size. It's never enough, but it's something."

Carrying Hope, One Meal at a Time

For Yousef, working in the kitchen brings a sense of purpose.

"When I'm chopping vegetables or stirring the giant pots, I can focus on the task at hand instead of thinking about everything we've lost. And when people thank us for the food, I feel like I'm contributing something positive in the midst of all this destruction."

His dream of becoming a doctor remains alive.

"The need is greater than ever. I've been learning first aid from a nurse in our camp. I help out at the medical tent when they need an extra pair of hands. It's not medical school, but it's experience. I'm good at staying calm in emergencies—maybe because we live in a permanent state of emergency now."

He carries his father's words with him:

"My father used to say that education is the one thing no one can take from you. They've taken our home, our possessions, my father's life—but what I've learned stays with me. Somehow, I will find a way to continue my education. Gaza will need doctors long after this war ends."

Women Bearing the Burden

(Nada, 34, Mother of four, Khan Younis)

Nada was a primary school teacher before the conflict. After losing her husband in an airstrike in January 2024, she now raises their three children alone in a displacement camp in Khan Younis.

"The hardest moment of my day is when my children ask when we can go home. How do I explain that our home no longer exists? That the neighborhood where they rode their bicycles and played has been reduced to rubble? I tell them this tent is only temporary. I don't know if I'm giving them hope or illusions."

Life's burdens now rest solely on her shoulders.

"Before I lost my husband, we shared the responsibility. Now I must find food and water, keep the children clean and healthy, comfort them when the bombs fall or when they cry in their sleep. Some days, the weight of it all feels unbearable."

And yet, she continues.

"My neighbors have become my family. When I have nothing, someone always shares. When I feel I can't go on, someone lifts me. We survive together—or not at all."

Carrying Dreams, Sustaining Life

Nada continues to teach—not only her children, but others in the camp.

"We gather under a tarpaulin when weather allows. I teach Arabic, math, and science. There are no books, no proper notebooks—just scraps of paper and a few pencils we guard like treasure. But the children's hunger to learn is as strong as ever."

She speaks of her late husband with pride and pain.

"He was so proud of our oldest son, who excelled in math. 'He will be an engineer,' he'd say. 'He will help rebuild Gaza.' Now I carry that dream for both of us. I tell my son, 'Study hard. Your father is watching. He believes in you.'"

Grief, she says, is a luxury she cannot afford.

"There's too much to do. I cry at night when the children sleep. By day, I'm strong because I have to be. This is what it means to be a mother in Gaza—to create safety where none exists, to nurture hope in the ruins, to keep life going, even when everything else has stopped."

(Umm Hassan, Mother of Four, Khan Younis)

Umm Hassan lives in a tent with her four children, ages 3 to 12. Her husband is missing and presumed dead after an airstrike on his workplace in November 2023.

"I wake up before dawn to queue for water. Sometimes I wait for hours, only to get a few liters. I must decide: Do my children drink today, or do we wash? Do I cook, or clean our clothes? These are choices no mother should ever have to make."

The water is often salty or polluted.

"My youngest developed a rash from bathing. The doctor said it's from the salt, but what choice do we have? I try to boil the water when fuel is available—but fuel is as rare as clean water."

Once celebrated for her cooking, she now cooks to survive.

"For Eid, I made maqluba, stuffed vine leaves, knafeh. Now, it's one pot of rice or lentils for the whole day. My children never complain, but I know they are always hungry. They've learned to expect so little."

Her 12-year-old son, Hassan, helps however he can.

"He stands in food lines and searches for wood. He comforts his siblings with stories of their father, promising he'll return. I don't have the heart to tell him I believe his father is gone. Let him hold on to hope a little longer."

Holding Dignity in a Tent of Grief
Maintaining dignity is her daily struggle.

"How do you stay clean without water? Keep privacy in a crowded tent? Preserve innocence in the shadow of death? I try to create routines—meals, lessons, sleeping spaces. Structure keeps us human in these inhuman conditions."
Her hopes for her children have changed—but not disappeared.
"We saved for years so they could attend university. Now, the banks are inaccessible and money is meaningless. Instead, I teach them to be resilient, to share, to find joy in small things. To keep faith, even when God feels far away."
She has one message for the world:
"We are not just statistics. Every number you hear is a family like mine—people who had dreams, normal lives, plans for the future. Now, we count drops of water and grains of rice. Remember our humanity, even if your leaders have forgotten it."

Elderly – Wisdom Amid Hardship

(Umm Khalil, 78, Deir al-Balah)

Umm Khalil has lived through multiple wars in Gaza. After losing her home in northern Gaza, she now resides in a displacement camp with her son's family. She is known for her deep knowledge of traditional medicine and oral history.

"This is not our first suffering, and it may not be our last. But we remain. We endure. This is what it means to be Palestinian in Gaza—to live, to continue, to remember, and to hope even when hope seems foolish."

Her memories go back to 1948:

"I was a child during the Nakba. We fled from our village near Ashkelon. I still remember the taste of oranges from our grove, the cool tiles of our courtyard, and my father's voice calling us inside. These memories are jewels—they cannot be taken."

She has lived through many displacements.

"Each time we rebuild. Each time we continue. But this war... it's the worst. The destruction is more complete, the pain more widespread. Still, I tell my grandchildren: We will endure this too."

Now, she is a teacher of forgotten skills.

"The young come to me to learn the old ways—how to treat illness with herbs, preserve food without electricity, deliver babies without hospitals. My grandmother taught me, and now I teach anyone willing to learn. This knowledge must not die."

Holding Memory, Passing Strength

Each evening, children gather around Umm Khalil for stories.

"I tell them about our villages before the wars, about weddings and songs, about Palestine's beauty. These are not just stories—they are a way to keep our heritage alive. When a child names wildflowers or knows the dabke steps, our culture lives on."

She has seen immense loss:

"I've buried a husband, two sons, and too many friends. Grief has lived beside me. But I've also seen kindness—people giving their last piece of bread, comforting strangers' children, carrying the old on their backs to safety. This is Gaza, too."

Even in exhaustion, she finds strength in purpose.

"My body is tired. Life in the camp is hard for someone my age. But every morning I wake is a gift. It's one more day to pass on wisdom, to comfort someone in pain, and to remind the young: there was a Gaza before this, and there will be a Gaza after it. That is my purpose now."

(Abu Mahmoud, 82, Former Fisherman, Rafah)

Abu Mahmoud spent over fifty years of his life at sea, fishing the Mediterranean waters off Gaza. Now, after the destruction of his home and boat in December 2023, he lives in a tent in Rafah with his daughter's family.

"The sea was my life. For over fifty years, I rose before dawn, prepared my nets, and set out in my boat. I knew every current, every reef, every season's bounty. Even when the Israeli navy pushed us into shallow, polluted waters, the sea still provided for my family."

Now, the sea is gone from view.

"From our tent, I see only dust and endless rows of canvas. I miss the salt air, the rhythm of the waves, the freedom that only comes on open water."

His boat was destroyed in the bombing—along with his way of life.

"It was just wood and rope, but it carried my sons and grandsons. It gave them purpose. Now they stand in aid lines instead of casting nets. That loss is greater than we admit."

Younger generations dream of escape, but he cannot imagine leaving.

"I understand them—what future can they see here? But I cannot leave Gaza. My roots are in this land. I would rather die here than live as a stranger elsewhere."

nchored in Memory, Rooted in Faith

Abu Mahmoud reflects on how Gaza has changed.
"When I was a boy, before 1948, we traveled freely—visited family in Jaffa and Jerusalem. Then came borders, walls, blockades. Every decade, our world shrinks."
Despite all, he held hope for the next generation.
"I dreamed my grandchildren would live in a Gaza with clean water, working hospitals, freedom to trade. Now I fear they may not see Gaza at all—only ruins, or worse, its erasure."
But his faith and identity remain firm.
"What sustains me is our sumud—our steadfastness. We Palestinians endure. We carry the land in our hearts, even when it's taken from beneath our feet."
Each evening, he leads his family in prayer.
"We've lost everything—but not our faith. I don't pray for myself; my life is nearly complete. I pray for the young: that they know peace, rebuild what's broken, and remember where they come from. That is my last hope."

Professionals: Service Amid Chaos

(Dr. Khalil, 45 — Surgeon at Al-Aqsa Hospital)

Dr. Khalil has served as a surgeon in Gaza for over two decades. Since October 2023, he has operated in conditions bordering on the unimaginable.

"We were in the middle of abdominal surgery when the lights went out. The nurse held her phone over the patient so I could see. He was awake—we had no general anesthesia left. I saw the pain in his eyes... and the trust. He knew we were doing all we could."

This has become routine: complex operations with basic tools, little medicine, and unreliable electricity.

"Before the war, we faced shortages due to the blockade, but we managed. Now, we practice a kind of battlefield medicine—making impossible choices about who receives treatment, who gets pain relief, who is left to suffer."

The injuries are beyond comprehension.

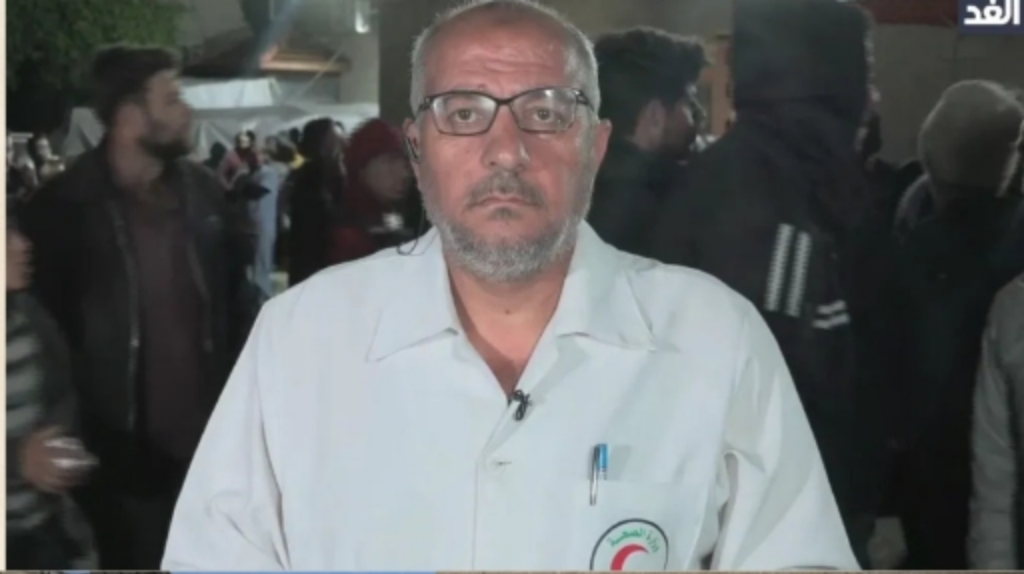
"Traumatic amputations. Severe burns. Crushed limbs. And often, these patients—many of them children—come to us after losing their entire family in the same strike that wounded them."

Dr. Khalil and his colleagues work long shifts—often 24 to 36 hours straight.

"We sleep on gurneys or floors. Many of our staff are gone—killed, injured, or unable to reach the hospital. Those of us who remain carry an impossible burden.

Healing in the Ruins – A Surgeon's Resistance

Dr. Khalil has not seen his family in months.
"They're in a displacement camp in Rafah. I haven't heard from them in weeks. I worry, but I can't stop working. The patients in front of me need me more than my fear allows."
The hospital is barely functioning.
"Blown-out windows. Cracked walls. Overcrowded halls. A hospital built for 80 beds now shelters more than 300 patients. We've moved surgeries to interior rooms to avoid sniper fire and shelling."
Medical ethics is strained to its breaking point.
"How do you choose which child gets the last dose of antibiotics? Which patient gets the only remaining vial of pain medicine? These are decisions no doctor should ever have to make. But we make them—every day."
What keeps him going is the dedication of the team.
"Doctors, nurses, paramedics—even janitors—still show up, often unpaid. We share everything, from food to hope. Every life we save reminds us that our work still matters."
Dr. Khalil's final message is a cry for structural change.
"The medical crisis in Gaza is not temporary—it is total collapse. We need more than supplies. We need an end to the bombing. We need electricity, clean water, freedom of movement for patients and staff. Without these, we will continue to watch lives slip away—lives that could have been saved."



EMERGENCY
AMBULANCE

(Noor Harazeen — Journalist, Gaza City)

Noor is a Palestinian journalist reporting from within Gaza, documenting its destruction and suffering while living through it herself.

"I try to be as professional as possible—just so no one can say that I'm biased because I'm Palestinian. I hold back tears, but sometimes I can't. I'm reporting on my own people, on my own city."

Since October 2023, journalism in Gaza has become one of the world's most dangerous professions.

"Over 100 journalists and media workers have been killed. Press vests and marked vehicles no longer protect us. But we continue, because if we stop, Gaza becomes invisible."

For Noor, the story is deeply personal.

"I report from the streets I grew up on—now unrecognizable. Schools where I studied lie in rubble. Parks are mass graves. This isn't just a story—it's the erasure of my own past."

She faces severe logistical obstacles.

"Power is nearly gone. I ration phone and camera batteries. Internet is rare. Sometimes I send a report not knowing if I'll be able to send another for days. And always, the sound of drones reminds me that nowhere is safe."

Bearing Witness — A Journalist's Mission

Fear is a constant, but not a deterrent.

"Of course I'm afraid. Too many colleagues are gone. But fear can't decide whether I do this work. The world must see not just Gaza's destruction, but the people behind the statistics."

Noor's interviews reveal the human cost.

"I've spoken with mothers who lost all their children. Surgeons operating by phone light. Children who can tell you the type of bomb by sound alone. These are not numbers—they are names, voices, lives."

Sometimes she questions the impact of her reporting.

"The bombs fall whether or not I document them. But then I hear from people abroad who say they finally understand Gaza—or from Palestinians in exile grateful to hear any news. That keeps me going."

To her, journalism is about truth, not neutrality.

"Objectivity doesn't mean neutrality in the face of suffering. It means accuracy, context, and allowing people to speak. The truth is not in the middle—it's in the rubble, in the hospitals, in children's eyes."

And she will continue, no matter how the story ends.

"I don't know what comes next—for Gaza, or for me. But it must be recorded. History must remember not just policies and war plans, but what ordinary people lived through. This is my duty. This is how I ensure Gaza's voice is heard."

PRESS
PRESS
PRESS

PRESS
PRESS
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PALESTINE

Conclusion – A Chorus of Resilience

These testimonies—diverse in age, background, and role—together form a chorus of human strength and struggle. From surgeons and teachers to mothers, youth, and elders, their voices paint a fuller picture of life in Gaza since October 2023.

They speak of loss, adaptation, solidarity, and an unrelenting will to live with dignity despite devastation.

What emerges is not simply a tale of suffering—but of agency.

The people of Gaza do not wait passively. They cook, heal, teach, record, create, and care. They make choices every day that affirm their humanity against efforts to dehumanize them.

Their resilience is not a symbol—it is a practice, rooted in purpose and survival.

They preserve culture in the ashes of ruins. They find new ways to teach without schools, to treat without medicine, to love while grieving. Their strength is real, lived, and earned through daily acts of endurance.

These voices demand something more from us.

They invite us to abandon simplistic narratives. They compel us to see Palestinians not as a monolithic tragedy but as individuals with dreams, intellect, and power. And they ask us to reflect on our role—not only as witnesses but as participants in a global community.

Chapter 5 – A Call to Solidarity

As the previous pages show, Gazans have demonstrated remarkable resilience. But resilience is not enough.

Resilience cannot rebuild homes, restore lost limbs, or repair broken education systems. It cannot substitute for justice or accountability.

This chapter begins a shift—from testimony to action.

We explore what true solidarity with Gaza looks like. Not pity. Not charity. But partnership—with the people of Gaza as equals in their own recovery.

Genuine solidarity asks:

How can individuals, civil society, and governments support Palestinians as agents of their future, not victims of their past?

What does ethical listening mean?

How can we turn empathy into infrastructure, journalism into justice, and memory into momentum?

The voices we've heard are not just documentation—they are an invitation.

An invitation to build a future where dignity is not resilience under bombs, but a right upheld in peace.

Beyond Sympathy: Understanding Solidarity

Solidarity differs fundamentally from charity or sympathy. While charity often positions the giver as superior to the recipient, and sympathy may remain at the level of emotion without action, solidarity implies a relationship of mutual respect and shared commitment to justice. It recognizes that the well-being of all people is interconnected and that injustice anywhere threatens human dignity everywhere.

For Gaza, meaningful solidarity begins with recognition of universal human values that transcend political divisions—dignity, self-determination, security, and opportunity. It acknowledges that Palestinians, like all people, deserve to live in peace, to have their basic needs met, to pursue education and livelihoods, to move freely, and to determine their own future.

As Dr. Ghassan Abu-Sittah, the British-Palestinian surgeon who volunteered in Gaza, observed: “We should celebrate the resilience and creativity of Gaza’s people without romanticizing their suffering or accepting the conditions that make such innovation necessary. The ultimate solution is not better coping mechanisms but an end to the conditions that require them.”

Humanitarian Support: Meeting Immediate Needs

The most urgent form of solidarity involves addressing the humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Gaza. As documented in previous chapters, by April 2025, over 2.1 million Gazans were facing acute shortages of food, medicine, fuel, and clean water. No aid had entered Gaza since March 2, 2025, according to UNICEF, exacerbating an already dire situation.

Supporting Humanitarian Organizations (Part 1)

Even amid destruction and siege, several humanitarian organizations continue to operate in Gaza, providing critical support. Their presence is a lifeline—and it must be sustained through international solidarity and funding.

1. UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)

Despite funding cuts and repeated attacks on its facilities, UNRWA remains the primary provider of humanitarian aid, education, and healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

By April 2025, more than one million Gazans—half the population—relied on UNRWA for survival.

2. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders – MSF)

MSF medical teams have provided emergency surgeries, trauma care, and mental health support throughout the conflict.

Their reports offer both life-saving services and documentation of the medical crisis unfolding daily in Gaza.

3. PCRF (Palestine Children's Relief Fund)

A non-political, humanitarian organization dedicated to treating Palestinian children.

PCRF organizes specialized surgeries, rehabilitation, and psychological care, often coordinating international teams to help those with chronic or war-related injuries.

Supporting Humanitarian Organizations (Part 2)

4. Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid)
Anera delivers emergency aid while also investing in long-term infrastructure.
In Gaza, it supports health clinics, education programs, and economic development, ensuring that aid also contributes to sustainable recovery.
5. Local Palestinian Organizations
Groups such as PENGON (Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network) focus on community-led resilience.

These include projects like solar-powered water systems, urban gardens, and youth-led health education, described earlier in Chapter 3.
Why Support Matters:
Donations and advocacy for these organizations directly translate into:
Essential supplies (food, water, medicine)
Salaries for local workers
Repairs for damaged clinics and shelters
Continued operations during siege and conflict
Supporting them is not charity—it is an act of justice and partnership in sustaining life and dignity.

Advocating for Humanitarian Access

Beyond financial support, solidarity requires advocating for unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. As UN officials stated in April 2025, "assertions that there is now enough food to feed all Palestinians in Gaza are far from the reality on the ground." The UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, emphasized that "we are being deliberately blocked from saving lives in Gaza, and so civilians are dying."

Effective advocacy might include:

- Contacting elected representatives to demand that their governments pressure Israel to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza without restriction
- Supporting campaigns for the opening of all crossing points into Gaza for humanitarian supplies
- Amplifying the voices of humanitarian workers on the ground who can testify to actual conditions
- Challenging misinformation that minimizes the scale of the humanitarian crisis

Such advocacy recognizes that the suffering in Gaza is not simply a natural disaster requiring charity but a human-made crisis requiring political solutions.

Amplifying Palestinian Voices (Part 1)

One of the most powerful and urgent forms of solidarity is the amplification of Palestinian voices—those most directly affected, yet too often sidelined in global narratives.

For decades, Palestinians have documented their own experiences through journalism, literature, art, testimony, and digital activism. Yet despite the clarity and consistency of these voices, they are frequently excluded from mainstream media discussions, policy forums, and humanitarian decision-making.

As Dr. Ghada Ageel, a Palestinian academic at the University of Alberta, remarked:

"We have been sending the stories. The problem is not with the story. The problem is with Western media and Western politicians that opted to remain silent."

The marginalization is not accidental—it is structural. Palestinian perspectives are often filtered, dismissed, or presented only through the lens of geopolitics or security concerns.

Amplifying Palestinian Voices (Part 2)

To truly support Gaza, we must center Palestinian narratives on their own terms.

This means:

Quoting Palestinian journalists and scholars directly

Elevating local testimonies, diaries, and creative work

Supporting Palestinian-led media platforms and cultural organizations

Challenging biased coverage and selective outrage in global media

Amplifying does not mean speaking for Palestinians—it means making space, listening with humility, and ensuring that their truths reach global audiences unfiltered.

Every repost, citation, and platform matters. Every time a Western policymaker or publication shares a Palestinian voice instead of silencing it, they contribute to a more just and honest conversation.

Because the world doesn't suffer from a lack of Palestinian stories—it suffers from a lack of will to hear them.

Supporting Palestinian Journalists and Storytellers

Palestinian journalists like Noor Harazeen risk their lives to document what is happening in Gaza. By April 2025, according to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate, 208 journalists and media workers had been killed since October 2023. Those who continue reporting do so under extreme conditions—limited electricity for charging devices, restricted internet access, and constant danger.

Supporting independent Palestinian media outlets, following Palestinian journalists on social media platforms, and sharing their reporting helps ensure that firsthand accounts reach wider audiences. It also provides economic support for professionals whose livelihoods have been devastated by the conflict.

Beyond journalism, Palestinians in Gaza and the diaspora express their experiences through literature, film, visual art, and music. Engaging with these cultural productions—reading Palestinian authors, watching films by Palestinian directors, appreciating Palestinian art—creates space for Palestinians to narrate their own stories rather than being spoken about by others.

Challenging Dehumanizing Narratives

Solidarity also involves challenging narratives that dehumanize Palestinians or present them solely as victims without agency. Such narratives appear in political discourse, media coverage, and even well-intentioned humanitarian appeals that emphasize suffering without acknowledging Palestinian aspirations, capabilities, and rights.

As we have seen throughout this book, the people of Gaza are not passive recipients of aid but active agents who create solutions, maintain community structures, preserve cultural heritage, and envision a better future despite overwhelming obstacles. Solidarity means recognizing and respecting this agency.

It also means insisting on the application of universal standards—that Palestinian lives are as valuable as any others, that Palestinian children deserve the same security and opportunity as children anywhere, that Palestinian civilians are protected by the same international laws that protect civilians in other conflicts.

Supporting Reconstruction and Development

Meeting Long-Term Needs Beyond Survival

Humanitarian aid addresses immediate suffering, but true solidarity with Gaza must extend to reconstruction and long-term development. The destruction inflicted since October 2023 has dismantled not just buildings, but the very systems that sustain life.

By April 2025:

60% of Gaza's homes were destroyed or severely damaged.

Over 80% of schools were either flattened or turned into shelters.

Dozens of hospitals and clinics no longer function.

Access to clean water has fallen below emergency levels for most of the population.

Electricity is nearly absent, with supply often dropping to just 1–2 hours per day.

This is not a crisis that can be patched—it is a total collapse requiring full-scale, strategic reconstruction.

A Just and Sustainable Rebuilding Process

Strategic Goals for Recovery and Resilience
Rebuilding Gaza must center justice, local leadership, and sustainability, with the following priorities:

- Housing: Reconstruction of homes using climate-resilient, locally sourced materials.
- Infrastructure: Restoring water, sanitation, electricity, internet, and roads.
- Education: Rebuilding schools and universities, with investment in digital access.
- Healthcare: Rehabilitating trauma centers, maternal clinics, and mental health services.
- Economy: Reviving agriculture, small businesses, and digital job platforms.

Barriers to Implementation:
The Israeli blockade continues to restrict entry of essential materials.
Ceasefire instability and recurring conflict disrupt long-term planning.
Donor fatigue and political conditions reduce financial support.
Fragmented governance complicates coordination and trust.
Solidarity must mean more than aid. It must include:
Technical expertise
Political advocacy to lift restrictions
Direct partnerships with local institutions
Legal action for reparations
Empowerment of Palestinian-led recovery
To rebuild Gaza is to affirm that Palestinians not only deserve a future—but have the right to shape it on their own terms.

Advocating for Lifting the Blockade

Meaningful reconstruction cannot occur while Gaza remains under blockade. Building materials, equipment, and expertise must be able to enter freely. People must be able to move in and out for education, medical care, and professional development. Goods must be able to flow in both directions to rebuild Gaza's economy.

Solidarity includes advocating for a complete lifting of the blockade that has restricted movement of people and goods since 2007. This advocacy recognizes that humanitarian aid, while essential in the short term, cannot substitute for normal economic activity and development in the long term.

Supporting Palestinian-led Reconstruction

When reconstruction becomes possible, solidarity means supporting Palestinian-led efforts rather than imposing external models or conditions. The people of Gaza have the expertise, skills, and understanding of local needs to guide their own rebuilding process. International support should enhance rather than replace this local capacity.

This might include:

- Supporting Palestinian universities and technical schools to train the architects, engineers, healthcare professionals, and other specialists needed for reconstruction
- Funding Palestinian civil society organizations that can implement community-based development projects
- Advocating for Palestinian control over reconstruction resources rather than external management
- Recognizing Palestinian sovereignty over natural resources, including offshore gas reserves and water sources

Such an approach acknowledges that sustainable development requires not just physical reconstruction but the restoration of Palestinian self-determination and dignity.

Education and Awareness (Part 1)

Solidarity Begins with Understanding

For those outside Gaza, true solidarity starts not with action, but with education—a commitment to understanding the deeper roots of the crisis and the humanity of those enduring it.

Before one can stand with Gaza, one must first listen to it.

This means:

Learning the historical context—from the Nakba of 1948 to the siege policies and repeated wars.

Exploring firsthand testimonies, literature, documentaries, and journalism by Palestinians.

Understanding that Gaza's suffering is not simply the product of natural disaster or random violence—but the result of structural, political, and military systems that restrict freedom, development, and dignity.

Too often, public opinion is shaped by selective headlines or political narratives that dehumanize Palestinians and obscure the reality on the ground.

Education breaks that cycle. It opens the way to empathy, responsibility, and ethical engagement.

Education and Awareness (Part 2)

From Knowledge to Responsibility

Educating oneself is not a passive act. It is the foundation of meaningful action. Those who understand the context can:

Challenge misinformation in media and public discourse.

Support Palestinian academics, writers, and educators.

Advocate for curriculum reform that includes Palestinian history and voices.

Engage in public discussions, using facts and human stories—not just opinions.

Awareness without action can become voyeurism. But awareness that informs conscience becomes solidarity.

Reading books, attending lectures, following Palestinian journalists, and even simply questioning inherited narratives are acts of resistance against the erasure of Palestinian identity.

The more people know about Gaza, the harder it becomes to ignore its reality—and the louder its voice becomes in the world.

Learning from Palestinian Sources

While this book offers an introduction to the situation in Gaza since October 2023, it is no substitute for engaging directly with Palestinian historians, analysts, and community members. Resources for deeper understanding might include:

- Books by Palestinian authors such as Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said, and Ghada Karmi
- Reports from Palestinian human rights organizations like Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights
- Academic work from Palestinian research institutions like the Institute for Palestine Studies
- Cultural productions including films, literature, and art by Palestinians in Gaza and the diaspora

Learning from these sources helps counter the marginalization of Palestinian perspectives in mainstream discourse and provides a more complete understanding of the context.

Sharing Knowledge in Your Community

Individual education becomes solidarity when it extends to sharing knowledge with others. This might involve:

- Organizing reading groups or film screenings focused on Palestinian experiences
- Inviting Palestinian speakers (in person or virtually) to share their perspectives
- Creating social media content that amplifies Palestinian voices and challenges misconceptions
- Engaging in respectful dialogue with those who hold different views about the conflict

Such efforts help build a more informed public discourse about Gaza and the broader Palestinian situation, creating the conditions for more effective advocacy and policy change.

Political Advocacy

Ultimately, the situation in Gaza cannot be resolved through humanitarian aid or individual solidarity alone. It requires political solutions that address root causes and ensure respect for Palestinian rights under international law.

Advocating for Policy Change

Depending on one's location and context, political advocacy might include:

- Contacting elected representatives to demand changes in government policy toward Israel/Palestine
- Supporting candidates who demonstrate commitment to Palestinian human rights
- Participating in campaigns for sanctions or other measures to hold violators of international law accountable
- Engaging with faith communities, labor unions, professional associations, and other civil society groups to adopt positions supporting Palestinian rights

Effective advocacy focuses not just on ending immediate violence but on addressing the underlying conditions—occupation, blockade, displacement, and discrimination—that make such violence cyclical.

Supporting Palestinian Civil Society

Palestinian civil society organizations work daily to document human rights violations, provide services, and advocate for justice. Supporting these organizations—financially and by amplifying their work—strengthens Palestinian-led efforts for change.

Organizations like Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza document violations of international law and advocate for accountability. Others provide legal aid to Palestinians facing home demolitions, land confiscation, or arbitrary detention. Still others work on environmental justice, women's rights, children's welfare, and other issues that affect daily life.

By supporting these organizations, individuals outside Gaza can contribute to Palestinian-led movements for justice and dignity.

A Vision for Gaza's Future

Throughout this book, we have encountered Palestinians in Gaza who, despite everything, maintain a vision for a better future—one characterized by peace, security, dignity, and opportunity. Solidarity means sharing and supporting this vision, refusing to accept that the current reality is inevitable or unchangeable.

Reconstruction

The physical rebuilding of Gaza will be an enormous undertaking, requiring not just resources but political will. A vision for reconstruction includes:

- Rebuilding homes, schools, hospitals, and infrastructure to higher standards than before
- Developing sustainable systems for water, energy, and waste management
- Creating public spaces that support community well-being and cultural expression
- Preserving historical and cultural sites that connect Palestinians to their heritage

This vision recognizes that reconstruction is not just about restoring what was lost but about building something better—a Gaza that meets the needs and aspirations of its people.

Education

Education has always been highly valued in Palestinian society, with Gaza historically maintaining high literacy rates despite economic hardship. A vision for Gaza's educational future includes:

- Rebuilding and expanding schools and universities
- Developing curriculum that prepares students for local and global opportunities
- Supporting teacher training and professional development
- Ensuring access to education for all, regardless of gender, ability, or economic status
- Facilitating international academic exchange and collaboration

This vision recognizes education as essential not just for individual opportunity but for collective development and self-determination.

Peace

Ultimately, Gaza's future depends on achieving a just and lasting peace that respects the rights and security of all people in the region. While the path to such peace remains unclear amid ongoing violence, the vision must be maintained and articulated.

Peace for Gaza means not just the absence of bombing but the presence of freedom—freedom of movement, freedom from fear, freedom to develop and flourish. It means security not just in the negative sense of protection from harm but in the positive sense of having basic needs met and rights respected.

This vision of peace recognizes the interconnectedness of all people in the region and the necessity of solutions that address the legitimate needs and rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The Choice of Solidarity (Part 1)

In the face of relentless suffering, it is easy to look away. The crisis in Gaza can feel overwhelming—too complicated, too painful, too far removed from our own lives.

But the stories in this book—of courage, creativity, grief, and unyielding hope—demand more than silent sympathy.

They invite us to make a choice.

A choice to listen.

A choice to care.

A choice to stand in solidarity.

Solidarity begins with the recognition that we share a common humanity with the people of Gaza. It is not about politics—it is about people. It is about:

- Educating ourselves about the history and ongoing reality
- Amplifying Palestinian voices
- Supporting locally led recovery and resilience
- Advocating for policies that uphold human rights and international law

This is not abstract. It is deeply personal. Because when we ignore injustice, our own humanity erodes. But when we respond, we reclaim it.

The Choice of Solidarity (Part 2)

Solidarity is not a passive emotion. It is an active commitment.

To move beyond despair into purposeful hope.

To move beyond pity into partnership.

To move beyond witnessing into action.

The heartbeat of Gaza—the quiet persistence of life and dignity amid devastation—calls out to the world. It tells us that something enduring remains, even in the rubble: the will to survive, to remember, to rebuild.

In the words of Tala Herzallah, the 21-year-old student whose life was shattered but whose voice endures:

"I hope that we'll stay alive, not because I want life, but because I want to tell our stories—the stories of our people."

And so we end this book where it truly begins:

With the decision to listen.

With the courage to care.

With the belief that solidarity is not charity—it is shared humanity in action.

Timeline of Key Events: October 7, 2023 - April 2025

October 2023

• *October 7*: Hamas launches surprise attack on southern Israel, killing approximately 1,200 Israelis and taking about 250 hostages.
• *October 7-8*: Israel begins airstrikes on Gaza in response.
• *October 9*: Israel declares a "complete siege" of Gaza, cutting off electricity, fuel, food, and water supplies.
• *October 12:* Israeli military orders evacuation of northern Gaza, affecting approximately 1.1 million residents.
• *October 17:* Explosion at Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City results in dozens of Palestinian casualties.
• *October 21:* Limited humanitarian aid begins entering Gaza through Rafah crossing with Egypt after intense diplomatic pressure.
• *October 27:* Israel expands ground operations in northern Gaza.
• *October 31:* By month's end, approximately 800,000 Palestinians internally displaced according to UN estimates.

November 2023

•*November 15:* Israeli forces take control of Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest medical facility, claiming Hamas used it as a command center (Hamas and hospital staff deny these claims).
•*November 24:* First temporary ceasefire begins, allowing for release of some hostages and increased humanitarian aid.
•*November 30:* Ceasefire ends, with Israel resuming military operations.

December 2023

• *December 5*: Israeli military operations expand to southern Gaza, including Khan Younis.

• *December 12:* UN General Assembly passes resolution calling for immediate humanitarian ceasefire (153 countries in favor).

• *December 20*: World Food Programme warns of "full-blown famine" in Gaza.

• *December 25:* Death toll in Gaza surpasses 20,000 according to Gaza Health Ministry.

January 2024

• *January 5:* Israel announces "new phase" of war, with reduced intensity in northern Gaza.

• *January 12*: South Africa files case at International Court of Justice accusing Israel of genocide.

• *January 19*: First phase of ceasefire takes effect in parts of Gaza.

• *January 26:* International Court of Justice orders Israel to take measures to prevent genocidal acts but does not order ceasefire.

February 2024

• February 8: U.S. President proposes framework for ceasefire and hostage release.

• February 13: Israeli military operation in Rafah to free hostages results in Palestinian casualties.

• February 22: Death toll in Gaza surpasses 30,000 according to Gaza Health Ministry.

• February 29: Dozens killed during aid distribution in Gaza City in contested circumstances.

March 2024

•*March 7*: UN warns that 576,000 people in Gaza (one-quarter of the population) are facing "catastrophic" levels of hunger.

•*March 14:* Israel allows limited aid to enter northern Gaza after international pressure.

•*March 25:* UN Security Council passes resolution calling for immediate ceasefire during Ramadan.

•*March 31:* Israeli airstrike kills seven aid workers from World Central Kitchen.

April 2024

•*April 7*: Israel withdraws from central Gaza, saying Hamas no longer functions as a military framework there.

•*April 13:* Iran launches direct attack on Israel with drones and missiles; most intercepted.

•*April 22*: Hamas releases videos of two hostages alive in captivity.

•*April 30*: Death toll in Gaza surpasses 35,000 according to Gaza Health Ministry.

May-December 2024

• *May 6:* Israel begins major military operation in Rafah despite international warnings about civilian casualties.

• *June 15:* Temporary ceasefire allows increased humanitarian aid for two weeks.

• *July 8:* International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders.

• *August 20:* Limited hostage-prisoner exchange agreement implemented.

• *September 10:* UN General Assembly votes to grant Palestine enhanced rights at the UN.

• *October 7:* One-year anniversary of the conflict; death toll in Gaza surpasses 40,000.

• *November 15*: New U.S. administration takes office, announces review of policy toward Israel-Gaza conflict.

• *December 24:* UN Security Council passes resolution calling for sustained ceasefire.

January-April 2025

• *January 10:* Major winter storm exacerbates humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

• *January 30:* International donors conference pledges billions for Gaza reconstruction, contingent on ceasefire.

• *February 15:* Temporary ceasefire begins, allowing increased humanitarian access.

• *March 2:* Ceasefire collapses; Israel resumes military operations and imposes complete aid blockade.
• *March 18:* Israeli forces escalate bombardment and expand ground operations across Gaza Strip.
• *April 2:* UN condemns killing of 1,000 people in Gaza since ceasefire collapse.
• *April 8:* Death toll in Gaza surpasses 50,000 according to Gaza Health Ministry.
• *April 15:* Two-thirds of Gaza Strip territory designated as "no-go" zones or placed under displacement orders.
• *April 24:* UN reports food prices in Gaza up to 1,400% above pre-ceasefire levels.
• *April 26:* Death toll reaches 51,439 with 117,416 wounded according to Gaza Health Ministry.

Humanitarian Organizations Working in Gaza

United Nations Agencies

UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees)

- *Focus*: Primary provider of humanitarian assistance, education, and healthcare for Palestinian refugees
- *Website*: unrwa.org
- *Impact:* By April 2025, over one million people—half of Gaza's population—relied on UNRWA aid for survival
- *Needs:* Funding for emergency food assistance, medical supplies, shelter materials, and education programs

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund)

- *Focus:* Protection and support for children in Gaza, including nutrition, education, and psychological support
- *Website*: unicef.org
- *Impact*: Provides vaccines, therapeutic food for malnourished children, and supports child-friendly spaces
- *Needs*: Funding for child nutrition programs, educational materials, and psychological support services

WHO (World Health Organization)

• Focus: Coordination of health response, support for hospitals and clinics, disease surveillance

• Website: who.int

• Impact: Provides essential medicines, supports trauma care, monitors disease outbreaks

• Needs: Medical supplies, support for healthcare worker salaries, fuel for hospital generators

WFP (World Food Programme)

• Focus: Food assistance and nutrition programs

• Website: wfp.org

• Impact: Provides emergency food rations and cash assistance where markets function

• Needs: Funding for food assistance, logistics support for aid delivery

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)

•Focus: Early recovery and infrastructure support

•Website: undp.org

•Impact: Supports community-led initiatives like solar desalination projects

•Needs: Funding for community resilience projects, technical expertise for infrastructure repair

International Non-Governmental Organizations

Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders)

• Focus: Emergency medical care, surgery, mental health support

• Website: msf.org

• Impact: Operates field hospitals and supports existing medical facilities

• Needs: Medical personnel, surgical supplies, medications.

Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF)

• Focus: Medical and humanitarian assistance for Palestinian children

• Website: pcrf.net

• Impact: Provides specialized surgeries, rehabilitation, and psychological support for injured children

• Needs: Medical supplies, support for pediatric care, prosthetics for children who have lost limbs.

Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid)

•Focus: Humanitarian assistance and development

•Website: anera.org

•Impact: Delivers emergency supplies and implements long-term health, education, and economic development projects

•Needs: Funding for emergency relief and development programs

Oxfam

• Focus: Water, sanitation, and food security

• Website: oxfam.org

• Impact: Supports water infrastructure repairs, hygiene promotion, and food security programs

• Needs: Funding for water and sanitation projects, agricultural recovery.

Save the Children

• Focus: Child protection, education, and health

• Website: savethechildren.org

• Impact: Provides educational support, child protection services, and pediatric healthcare

• Needs: Funding for child-focused humanitarian programs

Palestinian Organizations

Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS)

• Focus: Emergency medical services, disaster response

• Website: palestinercs.org

• Impact: Operates ambulance services, first aid stations, and field hospitals

• Needs: Medical supplies, ambulances, support for emergency responders

Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights

• Focus: Human rights monitoring and advocacy

• Website: mezan.org

• Impact: Documents human rights violations, provides legal aid, advocates for accountability

Needs: Support for human rights documentation and advocacy

Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON)

•Focus: Environmental justice and sustainable development

•Website: pengon.org

•Impact: Implements community-based environmental projects like solar water systems

•Needs: Technical support and materials for environmental projects

Gaza Community Mental Health Programme

• Focus: Mental health services and psychosocial support

• Website: gcmhp.ps

• Impact: Provides trauma counseling and mental health services

• Needs: Support for mental health professionals, training materials

Culture and Free Thought Association

• Focus: Education, culture, and psychosocial support

• Website: cfta-ps.org

• Impact: Runs educational and cultural programs for children and youth

• Needs: Educational materials, support for cultural activities

Key Reports and Resources

United Nations Reports

• OCHA Humanitarian Situation Updates: Regular reports on the humanitarian situation in Gaza
– Available at: ochaopt.org
• UNRWA Situation Reports: Updates on the situation of Palestinian refugees and UNRWA operations
– Available at: unrwa.org/resources/reports
• UN Human Rights Council Reports: Investigations into alleged violations of international humanitarian law
– Available at: ohchr.org

Human Rights Organizations

• Human Rights Watch: Reports on violations of international humanitarian law by all parties
– Available at: hrw.org
• Amnesty International: Documentation of human rights abuses and advocacy for accountability
– Available at: amnesty.org
• B'Tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories): Documentation from an Israeli human rights perspective
– Available at: btselem.org
• Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights: Documentation from a Palestinian human rights perspective
– Available at: mezan.org

Academic and Policy Resources

• Institute for Palestine Studies: Academic research on Palestinian issues
– Available at: palestine-studies.org
• Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Policy analysis on the Israel-Palestine conflict
– Available at: carnegieendowment.org
• International Crisis Group: Conflict analysis and recommendations for resolution
– Available at: crisisgroup.org

Media Resources

• +972 Magazine: Independent journalism from Palestinian and Israeli journalists
– Available at: 972mag.com
• Al Jazeera: Coverage with focus on Palestinian perspectives
– Available at: aljazeera.com
• Haaretz: Israeli newspaper with in-depth coverage of the conflict
– Available at: haaretz.com
• The Guardian Middle East: International coverage of the region
– Available at: theguardian.com/world/middleeast

How to Verify Information

In a conflict characterized by competing narratives and information warfare, verifying information is essential. Consider these guidelines:

1. Cross-check multiple sources: Compare reporting from different organizations with different perspectives.
2. Prioritize primary sources: First-hand accounts, official documents, and verified footage are more reliable than second-hand reporting.
3. Consider the source: Evaluate the track record, methodology, and potential biases of information providers.
4. Look for verification from international organizations: UN agencies and established human rights organizations typically employ rigorous verification standards.
5. Be wary of unverified claims on social media: While social media can provide valuable on-the-ground perspectives, it also facilitates the spread of misinformation.
6. Seek context: Individual incidents should be understood within broader patterns and historical context.
7. Recognize the fog of war: In active conflict zones, initial reports are often incomplete or inaccurate; look for updated information as more facts become available.

By approaching information with these principles in mind, readers can develop a more accurate understanding of the complex and contested reality in Gaza

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